DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 246 SO 026 538

AUTHOR	Fier, Harriet, Ed.; And Others
TITLE	Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together. User's Guide for K-8 Educators and Parents. My America: Building a Democracy Series.
PUB DATE	95
NOTE	7p.; "My America" is a 12-unit multimedia series with each unit consisting of a 15-20 minute videotape, resource directory diskette, and brief 8-page user guide. Only the printed user guides are included here; see SO 026 804-810 and SO 026 536-540.
AVAILABLE FROM	New Castle Communications, 229 King Street, Chappaqua, NY 10514.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Citizenship Education; *Community Development; Community Role; Democracy; Elementary Education; Parent Participation; School Community Programs; Social History; *Social Studies; United States History; Voting

ABSTRACT

The educational objective of this user's guide is to provide parents, teachers, and administrators with a resource to catalyze a wide range of partnerships and projects. Schools work best when everyone is actively involved so as to demonstrate democracy first hand. This program is designed to promote the democratic process of active citizenship in a multicultural society, build skills in communication, recognize the importance of voting, and experience how to build a community through caring and commitment. Suggestions are made for using the videotape "Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together." Activities to bring people together before viewing the videotape and after viewing the videotape are suggested. Contains an 11-item bibliography. (JAG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 404 246

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Shannon Murphy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

My America
Building a Democracy

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together

User's Guide For K-8 Educators and Parents

SO 026 538

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

My America
Building a Democracy

Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together

For K-8 Parents and Educators

"The kind of parental involvement needed in public schools is a working partnership of parents, teachers and administrators rather than an intensification of the separate, traditional parental involvement activities."

— Steven A. Melnick and Richard Fiene "Assessing Parents' Attitudes Toward School Effectiveness"

Educational objective

To provide parents, teachers and administrators with a resource to catalyze a wide range of partnerships and projects.

Video preview

Schools work best when everyone is actively involved. This video emphasizes how the ideals of the democracy come alive when children see parents and teachers communicating, cooperating and building caring communities. A beautifully illustrated Native American story about a young boy lost in the forest and the turtles who rescue him reveals the meaning of community — a place where people work and play together to achieve a common goal. We hear parents speak about their personal experiences getting involved in their children's education. We learn first-hand how proud children feel when a parent shows up for school events. We travel to Buffalo, NY, Las Vegas, New Mexico, Homestead, FL, Des Moines, IA and Washington, DC and see children, parents and teachers actively involved in a wide range of special community projects.

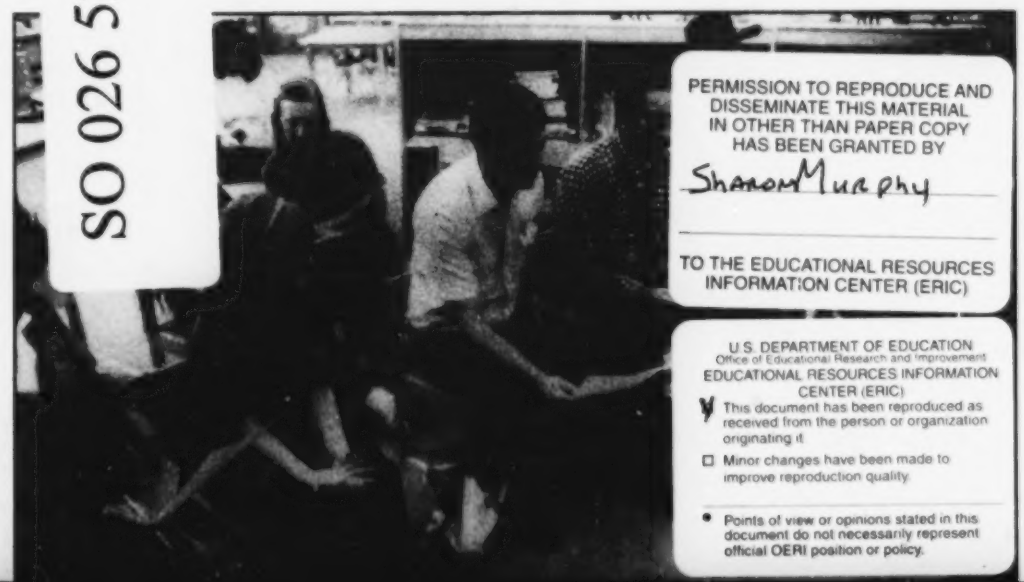
Suggestions for using "Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together"

This video mirrors an America that is vibrantly alive because of its diversity. It shows how parents who are fully engaged in the school life of their children have a positive effect their presence has on their educational growth. It presents parents talking to parents in a straightforward way about a wide range of opportunities for involvement. It is suggested that this video and guide be used over a period of time at regularly scheduled PTO meetings.

An individual or a small group should decide how the material can best be used to open up new ways of interacting among parents, teachers and administrators. You can decide to show the entire video at one sitting to initiate discussion and then cue up specific segments of the video at other meeting to begin in-depth exploration on a particular issue. You also can decide which of the Before Viewing and After Viewing activities meet the particular needs of the participants.

In the enclosed MY AMERICA ■ you will find sample letters, petitions, discussion prompt sheets and other resources to keep communication open and projects alive over the entire school year.

SO 026 538



PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sharon Murphy

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"When does democracy begin? Even very young children can begin to experience democratic principles through playing together. By third grade, working through projects together makes democracy real. Formulating a plan of action gives the children a feeling that they can have control over their environment."

— Susan Avino and Grace Cohen
Little Red Schoolhouse, NYC

Activities to bring people together: before viewing the video

★ What does it mean to have "a government of the people, by the people, and for the people"? Bring a group of parents, teachers and administrators together. Brainstorm and list adjectives that describe a democracy. Next, have the individuals brainstorm, define and list what it means to live in a community where everyone has "a right to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." People have protested, petitioned and gone to war to protect these basic human rights. Then divide the participants into small groups to create their own democratic vision statement by completing the following:

We can help build the democracy in _____(name of town/city) by _____.

Take time to share individual or small group definitions with the entire group.

★ In the Native American tradition, life is viewed as a journey that is a circle or a wheel. Their Circle of Law, or Sacred Medicine Wheel, is used to determine the best solution to a problem or answer to a question. One way to initiate new kinds of interaction among parents, teachers and administrators is to try using this Native American form of government called direct democracy. The Sacred Medicine Wheel is used by some Native American nations to insure that everyone has a voice in making decisions about community life. There are eight lodges or groups within the nation. Each lodge brings a question to open full discussion of the issue. See the MY AMERICA ■ for an activity sheet that presents the questions of each lodge.

★ Twenty-five years from now, the children in your schools will be the young adults living in and leading communities around the country. Ask the participants to close their eyes for a moment to consider the strongest positive vision statement they would like to make about life in their town/city 25 years into the future. Encourage them to see a city where life is in balance and people feel connected to one another and all the life around them. Have the participants write down their vision and then share it with the group.

★ Next, explain that in order to insure that their collective vision becomes a reality, they will have to make an effort to initiate a citywide civic effort to plan for the town's future. Explain how a petition is a point of view held by many people and that individuals sign their name to a petition to show their strong support for the idea. Generate together a petition to the Mayor expressing a need to assess current community health, safety, education, cultural, and economic concerns and focus on a plan to prepare for a better life in the next century. See the MY AMERICA ■ for a sample petition.

■ **See MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disk for other activities and discussion prompt sheets to bring people together.**

★ A letter writing campaign is another powerful tool to bring problems and issues to the attention of government and industry officials. Suggest that the participants take their individual vision statements for the town/city and put it in a personal letter to the Mayor. The joint petition and the individual letters should have a strong impact. See the MY AMERICA ■ for a sample letter.

Activities to bring people together: after viewing the video

★ Democracy is based on participation and voting is a powerful way to participate. Voting is key to a representative democracy. Form a committee of parents, teachers, administrators and children to organize a voter registration drive. This is a way to bring people together around an important civic right and responsibility. Involving the children follows through on the importance of being an active citizen role model for them. See the MY AMERICA ■ for a sample poster and sample press release announcing the voter registration drive.

★ Active citizens take responsibility for nurturing the quality of life in their communities. In a democracy, it is not about "us and them", it is all about "us". When citizens believe they

"You can serve in a variety of ways — attending board meetings, assisting teachers, communicating with parents who can't come to PTO meetings, acting as a liaison. We have an obligation as a community to be sure all the children's interests are represented."
—Parent

The MY AMERICA Newsletter publishes active citizenship projects and activities. Send your photos, stories, and video tapes to:
MY AMERICA Newsletter
c/o New Castle Communications, Inc.
229 King Street
Chappaqua, NY 10514

have the power to make positive social change, the democracy evolves and flourishes. It is important that children are encouraged early to take the time to express in writing what they think about the bills their representatives write and support or what their mayor and city council are proposing in their local community. This is one activity that parents can initiate at home to model active involvement in the democratic life. The MY AMERICA ■ provides teachers and parents with sample petitions and letters to legislators, politicians, community leaders and organizations. Once children and parents write and experience the power of being heard by the people elected to make laws, they will start to understand how they can make change happen in the community and in the country.

★ Strong working partnerships of parents, teachers and administrators create school environments where all children feel good about themselves and their achievements. Building these evolving partnerships means changing attitudes about traditional roles everyone plays and reinventing approaches and activities that will open up communication and collaboration possibilities. Current research provides compelling evidence that when parents are involved in their children's school, children go to better schools.

★ In the MY AMERICA ■ you will find Discussion Prompt Sheets to open up discussion, debate and decision making around the importance of creating and building working partnerships. Print out those that most apply to your school environment and use them with groups at PTO meetings or at special in service workshops.

Bibliography

Bloom, Jill. *Parenting Our Schools: a Hands On Guide to Education Reform*. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1992. Provides guidance in educational reform in the classroom, community and at the state level. The author empowers parents to take action by giving them the necessary tools, resources and information. Communities across the country where involved parents have made a change are spotlighted.

Fisher, D. Canfield. *Our Independence and the Constitution*. New York: Random House, 1990. The writing of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution seen through the eyes of a Philadelphia family.

Hansen, Barbara J. & Mackey, Philip English. *Your Public Schools: What You Can Do to Help Them*. CT: Catbird Press, 1993. Practical resource book for getting involved in public education. Includes a list of resources (associations and non-profits, federal agencies), a reading list and the addresses of state departments of education.

Henderson, Anne. *Beyond the Bake Sale: an Educator's Guide to Working with Parents*. MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1986.

Henderson, Anne T. & Berla, Nancy, *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement*, Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1994. This report covers 66 studies about how the family affects student achievement. It is informative, inspiring and an essential resource for everyone interested in education.

Jones, Claudia. More *Parents are Teachers Too: Encouraging Your 6-12 Year Old*. VT: Williamson Publishing Co., 1990. Includes activities, learning games, skill builders to help your child with creative problem solving and self-esteem.

Kaye, Peggy. *Games For Learning*. NY: The Noonday Press, 1991. Seventy original educational ways to help children master crucial learning skills (K-3)

Martz, Larry. *Making Schools Better*. NY: Times Books, 1992. Martz, a journalist, travels across the country introducing the readers to parents, teachers and community leaders who are effecting change in all types of schools.

Shore, Kenneth. *The Parents' Public School Handbook: How to Make the Most of Your Child's Education, From Kindergarten Through Middle School*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Williams, Michael. *Neighborhood Organizing for Urban Reform*. NY: Teachers College Press, 1989. Williams, an educator and neighborhood organizer, analyzes the barriers citizens meet in organizing to change their schools. He also gives suggestions and considerations for communities wanting to become more active in neighborhood organizations.

My America: Building a Democracy

MY AMERICA gives parents and teachers the tools to raise a generation that understands that they are the government. It shows how each time individuals participate in the life of their community the heart of the democracy beats stronger. It was filmed across the country in the voices of 5-14 year olds. In each voice there is hope that the original dream is still possible.

GOALS

The goals of these curriculum kits are to help children:

- become familiar with the democratic process and active citizenship,
- recognize what it means to be an active citizen in a multicultural society,
- build skills in communications and cooperation,
- recognize how laws are made and how a single vote and voice matter,
- experience how caring and commitment build community.

FORMAT

MY AMERICA is a 12 unit series, consisting of:

- 15-20 minute videos
- User Guides
- Resource Directory Disks (MS-DOS & MAC)

Materials were designed by educators, for educators. An interdisciplinary approach to hands-on learning is used.

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

The MY AMERICA kits motivate children to participate actively in their schools and local communities, and to experience the democratic process. The series attempts to demystify the government, explain how laws are made, and show how American democracy is always evolving. MY AMERICA combines elements of traditional civics and social studies curricula with techniques and activities that encourage children to participate and become involved. **Its underlying theme is: Democracy works best when everyone participates.**

MY AMERICA teaches in the voices of children in a way that respects their intelligence and natural curiosity.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

— Margaret Mead

THE VIDEOS

Each tape contains on-location documentaries, animation and historical illustrations. A classroom modeling lesson encourages children to use their skills in reading, writing, listening, painting, singing and performing. The cooperative learning model is central to each video.

The videos are developed within the following framework:

Kid View: Children give thought-provoking, lively opinions on each topic.

Documentary: Historical context and current concerns are blended with examples of children making a difference in their communities. This section is rich in historical information and opens up a wide range of discovery possibilities.

Modeling Lesson: Educators and students develop an interdisciplinary activity designed to bring alive the educational objective of the video.

Wrap Up: The key concepts recapped from the diverse perspectives of both children and adults.

THE USER GUIDES

Guides provide multiple learning experiences, lesson plans and bibliographies built around social studies and citizenship themes. Suggested activities are interdisciplinary in approach and focus on skills in communication and cooperation.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY DISKS (MS-DOS & MAC)

MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disks include black-lined master activity sheets, samples of letters to parents and organizations, petitions, proclamations and press releases—all of which can be customized. Also included are a listing of additional resources, bibliographic references for students and teachers, historical documents, and curriculum correlations.

This icon indicates that additional material is available on the MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disk.

© 1995 New Castle Communications, Inc.

My America
Building a Democracy

MY AMERICA:
BUILDING A
DEMOCRACY
THE USER'S GUIDE

Editor
Harriet Fier

Writer/Editor
Anne Marie Santoro

Researcher
Dahvi Waller

Art Direction
David Kaestle Inc.

Photography
Robin Bowman
Marianne Barcelona
Steve Northrup

MY AMERICA consists of the following program titles:

What is a Flag?
A Pledge is a Promise
Neighborhood and Community
Liberty and Justice
What is an American?
The Story of the National Anthem
What is a Democracy?
How Our Laws Are Made
Becoming an Active Citizen
Rights and Responsibilities

Teaching in a Multicultural Society (For Teachers)
Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together (For Parents)

ORDER 1-800-723-1263 TOLL-FREE

Other resources available when you purchase the entire multimedia series:
MY AMERICA Newsletter: published 3 times during the school year.
MY AMERICA Teacher Training Video: 10 classroom activities around civic issues.

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

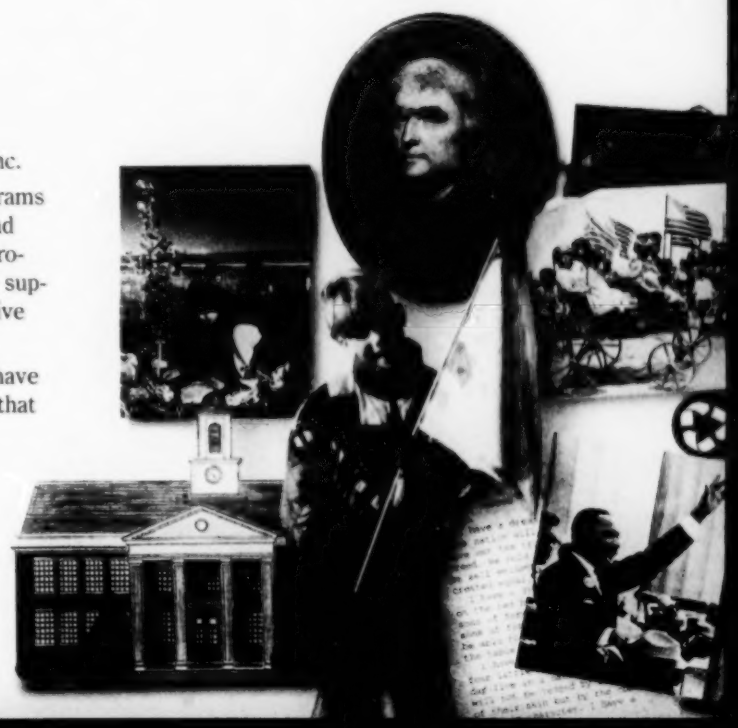
—The Great Law of the Six Nations
Iroquois Confederacy

About New Castle Communications, Inc.

MY AMERICA is published by New Castle Communications, Inc.

New Castle Communications is a publisher of educational programs that celebrate children and teachers. The company produces and distributes video, print and computer software materials that provide instruction and inspiration for elementary children. These supplemental curriculum titles foster awareness, critical and creative thinking, responsibility and active participation.

New Castle is dedicated to helping children learn the skills to have a positive impact on the world around them and to understand that their actions can and do make a difference.



NEW CASTLE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
229 King Street, Chappaqua, NY 10514 800-723-1263 Fax: 914-238-8445